

# Formby Civic News

The Newsletter of the Formby Civic Society  
[www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk)



## Formby Wildlife

February 2007



*A flock of Pink-footed Geese at Marshside. Photo P. Smith*



*The splendid wild life potential of the many ponds on Formby Hall Golf Course. Photo; R. Yorke*

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## Formby Wildlife - a new feature

It is proposed to publish a regular "wildlife notes" section in the Formby Civic Society newsletter and on the web-site to include interesting recent observations, tips on where to see wildlife in our area and ideas on how to participate in conservation projects, etc. It is intended to throw the net fairly wide, including not only Formby but other easily accessible areas of Sefton and West Lancashire.

These articles will be edited by Dr Phil Smith who has been active in wildlife recording and conservation locally for nearly four decades.

E-mail contributions from members are invited to

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## Formby's Pool in the Park is a reality!



*"Now open!" says Alan Roberts!; Photo Formby Times*

After decades of community based campaigning, led by a dedicated band of enthusiasts, not all of whom lived to see their dream come to fruition, and after a frustratingly protracted period of construction, Formby's new swimming pool opened to the public on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> January. Its first visitors' high expectations were not disappointed. The main feature is a five lane 25 metre swimming pool with adjacent learners' pool. There is also a personal fitness suite equipped with a wide range of high quality exercise machines. The café is intended to cater not only for users of the building's facilities, but it is hoped that it will also be patronised by Formby residents and visitors to the Village. A small meetings room is also available for booking.

Where once the long stretch of the Formby Football Club ground's 7ft fence, in varying degrees of disrepair, had marred the approach to Formby Village along Brows Lane, there now stand a large open area of beautifully landscaped parkland and a fine new building, which have transformed the ambience of the area. The building itself is modern in style, but not aggressively so, clean of line with a pleasing variation of vertical surfaces from glass, through wood to copper cladding and with a subtly curving roof line. As one approaches the building, the generous use of glass makes one very aware of its interior as well as its exterior form. Its head turning qualities could well

present a road traffic hazard for passing motorists! Pedestrians and cyclists approach the main entrance from Brows Lane by a broad tree lined walk-way at the north side of the building so that it is screened from the landscaped area by the building itself, which has been placed in the NW corner of the site. Visitors arriving by car do so from a car park, accommodating approximately 55 places, which is well offset from the parkland at the other end of the building. These arrangements were conceived with the object of keeping the parkland as free as possible from the hustle and bustle occasioned by visitors to the pool. An access crescent from Brows Lane is intended mainly for buses bringing parties of school children for swimming lessons, who will enter the building from its west

**"Its first visitors' high expectations were not disappointed. The main feature is a five lane 25 metre swimming pool with adjacent learners' pool."**

end so as to be close to their dedicated changing rooms, but it will also be used by service vehicles and emergency vehicles. This aspect has been skilfully handled and it does not detract from the appearance of the building, as service facilities are too often prone to do.

When one enters the building into the main reception foyer, one is immediately struck by the interesting and agreeable vistas of the building's interior spaces, seen through glass partition walls and accentuated by beautiful lighting, whether naturally by roof lights by day, or by electric lighting by night; visual interest is further heightened by generous views of the exterior

parkland. One's second impression is of the very high quality of the interior design and its execution – it could well be the interior of a high-class private fitness club. As well as recreational swimming, there will swimming lessons for children and aqua aerobics for adults. People using the gym will be advised by an instructor on a program of exercises appropriate to their needs and their workouts will be computer monitored, so there can be no shirking or overdoing it without the instructor's knowledge. An unusual external facility is a boules piste, which could well become very popular, given its agreeable setting, despite its somewhat exotic character for these parts.

The finance for the Formby Pool Project has in greater part come from the Freshfield Foundation and the Formby Land Trust inspired by trustee Patrick Moores, with a contribution from Sefton Council, in part as a *quid pro quo* for the sale of the Council Offices building at Freshfield Road for private development; the Council has also made a long term commitment to contribute to the running costs. Feilden Clegg Bradley Architects won the limited competition for the £5.5 million scheme (the land had earlier been purchased by the Formby Land Trust, at a cost of £3 million, as the beneficiary of a grant by the Freshfield Foundation). The Formby Pool Trust Board, under the chairmanship of Alan Roberts, has had oversight of the construction work. Now that the Board is charged with supervising the administration of the facility, its relationship with the community is set to change; there will be a formal mechanism for the community to communicate with the Board. In addition to the recreational spaces within the building, there is also scope, in the fullness of time, for the parkland as well to be exploited for larger community events. Altogether, this splendid new asset has the promise of becoming a new focal point in the Village

**Desmond Brennan**

# Friday afternoon at the Pool! - user impressions

by Rebecca Bridle

It was Friday afternoon and our three year-old daughter was dancing with excitement. She always enjoys her visits to Grandma and Grandpa's, but this trip was going to be extra special. At last, Formby's pool was open and we were going swimming!

The open-plan reception and café area had the feel of a light and airy hotel lobby, buzzing with people gathering information or having a coffee. The staff were friendly and keen to help. Adults pay £3.00 for a swim and my daughter was charged £1.80. We thought this was very reasonable

but there are membership schemes which offer discounts.

My husband reported that the changing rooms were clean and cleverly designed. Each cubicle has a door at either end so that you enter through one door and exit poolside through the other. This ensures that no muddy footprints contaminate the pool area. My husband and daughter used the learning pool and said it was heated to a comfortable temperature. Much splashing and fun was had by all.

Meanwhile, I sampled tea and cake with our youngest daughter

in the café. The glass wall overlooking the pool ensured we could watch the others enjoying themselves and it was a pleasant place to sit and pass the time. Although there seemed to be a few teething problems caused by a high volume of customers, I think the café will prove to be an attraction in its own right, offering as it does a wide range of healthy, often organic, light meals and snacks.

All in all, I think the *Pool in the Park*, although a long time coming, will live up to all expectations. We shall certainly visit again.

## Dickensian Day- report by Alan Burton



The society again ran a stand outside Derbyshire's on Dickensian day to publicise our activities. We ran a lucky dip for small children, showed exhibits about planning, history group, general meetings, outings, art group, membership, and sold Sibley

drawings, notelets and Discovering Formby information sheets.

After the rain last year the gazebo was waterproofed in the Summer and we were duly grateful as it rained periodically throughout the day. As

we were one of the few stands to offer shelter to visitors we became more popular when it rained.

One of the best things about the day is being able to chat to visitors about old Formby. We had two confessions about pinching fruit from the trees in the garden of the house where the Luncheon Club now stands. Another visitor recalled that the police force in Formby used to consist of a mounted sergeant in charge plus no less than about fourteen constables to keep the village in order, all rather different to today.

Our primary object was to make people more aware of the activities of the society but sales gave a contribution of £64.00 towards our funds including one new member who joined on the spot.

Thanks to all the members who called at the stand and particularly to those who assisted on the stand and helped with its erection and dismantling afterwards.

# Wildlife in the Formby Area by Phil Smith



Ravenmeols Dunes. Photo P. Smith P. Smith.

Increasing numbers of people are becoming interested in wildlife and the natural environment, perhaps partly because of television programmes which highlight this heritage and the impact that man is having on it. The attraction of nature to people is understandable when we realise that the countryside is open all the year round, is increasingly accessible and much of it free to visit and enjoy. Many wild plants and animals are fascinating and beautiful, while discovering the rare or unusual among them perhaps appeals to a “hunting instinct” developed during our species’ long existence as hunter-gathers with a close dependence on the natural world. We can still see footprints of people who followed that life-style only 5000 years ago preserved in sediments on Formby beach. Nowadays, we live in a very different way but it is increasingly recognised that contact with wildlife and wild places is good for our health and well-being.

Although wild nature has retreated in the face of modern human settlement and agriculture, even in such a crowded region as Merseyside there are still outstanding examples of habitats and species to be seen, some of which are rated as nationally or even internationally important. We are, for example, extremely fortunate in having on our doorstep the Sefton Coast with its wonderful sand-dune area, the largest in England and one of the most important for wildlife in Europe. The dunes are incredibly rich in wildflowers and insects, apart from

the well-known “flagship” species like the Red Squirrel, Natterjack Toad and Sand Lizard.

A little further afield is the Ribble Estuary with its extensive salt-marshes and mud-flats supporting flocks of wading birds,

ducks and geese, in numbers perhaps second only to Morecambe Bay amongst British estuaries. A particularly good selection of species can be seen in comfort from the hides at the RSPB’s Marshside Nature Reserve. Many waders, and also gulls and terns of several kinds, can be found on the sandy beaches adjacent to the dunes, while hardier souls may venture out during autumn gales to spot exciting sea-birds from Southport Pier or Formby Point.

**“there are still outstanding examples of habitats and species to be seen, some of which are rated as nationally or even internationally important”.**

Inland lie the reclaimed peat mosslands which must have been incredibly rich in wildlife before drainage but which still have spectacular flocks of wild Pink-footed Geese in winter.

There are also interesting nature reserves to visit, such as Martin Mere, managed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, and the Lancashire Wildlife Trust’s Mere Sands Wood.

A walk in a local park or along a countryside footpath can also be

rewarded by interesting sightings, while golfers in this region are particularly privileged in having access to some wonderful wildlife sites. Thus, most of the links courses along the coast are included in the Sefton Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Protection Area, while the more recently developed Formby Hall Golf Course has a series of ponds that are of increasing wildlife value.

Of course, we should not overlook interests nearer to home. Many people attract wildlife to their gardens which in total area are much more extensive than all nature reserves combined. A garden pond can be an endless source of fascination while feeding the birds in winter is also popular. A particular highlight for Formby gardens may be a visiting Red Squirrel, these being now almost as frequent in suburban gardens as the pine-woods.

The “support services” for wildlife watching have never been better. Optical aids in the form of binoculars, telescopes and cameras are available to suit every requirement and pocket, the variety on the market being quite bewildering. Also of great help are the high-quality field guides published at reasonable cost for almost every group of flora and fauna. The advent of the Internet means that additional information, often in great depth, is now available “on-line” especially for those subscribing to Broadband. Local web-sites are an invaluable aid.



Dune management mid 1980’s. Photo P. Smith

. Beginners can take advantage of the many guided walks around nature reserves and other protected sites organised throughout the year, but especially in summer, by voluntary bodies and the local authorities. These are accompanied by experts and are advertised in advance, their popularity being such as to require early booking!

Often, an enthusiasm for wildlife study leads on to a wish to make a positive contribution to the subject. Options range from sending in observations to the relevant local or national recording scheme to volunteer-

ing some spare time to work for one of the wildlife charities. Most of the local nature reserves also need and train volunteers to support the work of the full-time staff. Whether manual work in the field or employing office and academic skills indoors, volunteering is one of the most rewarding of activities, particularly in retirement.

In conclusion, the watchword must be to get out there and explore one of the best areas for wildlife in our

country. You will benefit in both mind and body and almost certainly find something new every trip!



## Lunt Lane Footpath

At the end of last year the society was approached to support local residents, and subsequently also Sefton's Footpaths Officer, in attempting to prevent loss of a footpath. Although the path has been used regularly by members of the public for several generations, during the summer it seems there were attempts made to stop people walking along it. Everyone had thought it was a Public Right of Way (RoW).

The path concerned is a continuation, on the other side of the By-Pass, of a footpath (a RoW) from Liverpool Rd to the By-Pass. It carries on as far as Downholland Brook (the New Causeway) but this eastern part of the footpath was not listed as a RoW, apparently as a result of council error many years ago. Sefton Council is now seeking to review the status of the path and, hopefully, the outcome will be that it becomes listed as a public RoW on the Definitive Map.

Most public rights of way in England and Wales have come into existence because landowners have 'dedicated' them to public use. In fact, very few

paths have been dedicated formally but the law assumes that if people use a path without interference for some time then the owner intended to dedicate it as a public right of way. These now appear in section 31 of the High-

**“Not all rights of way are yet shown on definitive maps but this does not mean that they are not public rights of way or that they cannot be used”.**

ways Act 1980 (although the common law rules still apply). If 20 years of public 'use as of right' can be proved then a right of way can be established. The 20 years is counted back from the date on which the public's right to use the way is first challenged.

Not all rights of way are yet shown on definitive maps but this does not mean that they are not public rights of way or that they cannot be used. It is open to anyone to apply to the relevant local authority for a definitive map modification order to add a path to the map. An application needs to

be backed with evidence, for example witness statements from users.

FCS is content to be the claimant on this occasion to have the RoW status of this footpath reviewed. We support efforts to retain (and expand) the network of local footpaths and we have helped those local residents who can confirm their personal use of the path for a long period to notify the Council on the appropriate Claim Evidence Form. If you can help support this application then please let the secretary know as soon as possible. We'll let you know how it develops.

**By David Willis**

**Please Note:- The Society's ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING is to be held at 8pm on Friday 27th April at Ravenmeols Community Centre. The Agenda will be sent out nearer the time.**

# Planning matters by Ray Derricott and D. Brennan

With the advent of the Planning sub-committee the volume, and with acknowledgment to Desmond, the quality of the Society's work in this area has improved considerably.

There has been a close monitoring of the work of Planning Officers in three main areas: the process of the validation of planning proposals; checking that the full period of time for consultations and commenting on proposals is respected; a systematic and clear way of dealing with proposals for telephone masts is followed.

In the past proposals to build walls and fences around properties have been dealt with inconsistently. The result of this has been the proliferation of walls/fences that abut onto pavements that are over 2 metres high. We have had some success in objecting to proposals to build high boundaries. The high wooden fence erected at the front of the Old Parsonage at 50 Green Lane was objected to. This has now gone to appeal. At the same time the owners of this property have submitted a new proposal to replace the fence with a high brick wall. This we will object to. There are three current proposals to build walls after alterations to the properties. None of these has

details of the proposed boundary walls. We are objecting to this lack of detail.

Formby has had its first two applications to erect wind turbines on residential property. The application for 30 Barton Heyes Road was recommended for approval by officers in the Agenda of the Planning Committee of 10 January 2007. This proposal has now been withdrawn.

A decision on a similar proposal for 14 Cambridge Road is still pending. We had asked for these Proposals not to go to delegation but to be discussed by the Committee with a view to producing some guiding principles for future proposes.

Grant's of Chapel Lane put in a proposal to provide an extended pavement seating arrangement in front of their premises. We objected to this because it obstructed the space beyond the proposed area onto an area that was very close to the road and further obstructed by Sefton street furniture. This proposal was withdrawn. The café/bar is probably going to try to take advantage of Sefton's scheme for charging traders for the use of the space in front of their premises.

We are presently considering a proposal from the Formby Pool Project to legitimate a whole range of activities from dancing to wrestling to take place within the pool complex which do not seem to need a licence. They probably need a health and safety inspection to see if the premises are fit for purpose. Also adults working with minors will need a Police clearance. Discussions on these matters are taking place with Alan Roberts so we have a clear view of their intentions.

**"Formby has had its first two applications to erect wind turbines on residential property".**

Related to this is the possibility that a restaurant might be opened in the space previously occupied by Byrnes. This brings back echoes of the Barracuda Affair. The idea of this has been dropped.

Quo Vadis is applying for its licensing hours to be extended to 0300. The regulations are such that it can only be opposed by producing actual evidence about, for example, noise levels. Developments of this kind show the urgency of producing an agreed Village Plan.

The Wicks Lane path is still with the

Legal Department. Having tried to find reasons for this, RD asked questions at last week's meetings of the Merseyside Local Access Forum and the Police Multi-Agency meeting and was told by a Councillor that the case had gone to appeal.

The establishment of a legal footpath from Lunt Lane to Downholland Brook is still being processed. The Society is the proposing agency for this proposal. If it is successful the path will be included on the definitive maps of Public Rights of Way.

The Society is up-dating the list of Formby Listed buildings. We have attempted to have the Old Post Office listed. Having written to the appropriate department three times we have yet to receive a reply. We are following up this case.

The Victoria Hall (c1885) is run by a Trust. The lease runs out in September and the Trustees do not wish to continue their involvement. The Society will investigate the possibility of having the building listed. This may stop any plan to demolish and use it for residential purposes.

Having taken a central role in the establishing a green conservation area at St Peters School we are impressed by the work of two young lads, probably scouts, who have been trying to tidy up the plot. They need help and support. Perhaps some members of the Society will volunteer their help.

Please Note:-

## **Subscriptions -**

are due by April 1st.

These remain as previously -

Single individual £10

Joint Membership £15

Under 18 £2

# Validation – the key to sound planning decisions

Validation is the process whereby a Local Planning Authority (LPA) scrutinizes a planning application to ascertain that it contains the information the LPA requires and that the information is presented to an acceptable standard. LPAs vary greatly in the amount of information they ask of an applicant, but all will insist on the basics, principal among them being that the plans are self-consistent, that the owner of the property is named and that the necessary fee has been paid.

Validation has come to have great importance in the planning process, since the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) now monitors the speed with which LPAs process planning applications and the count down starts on the day of validation. LPAs which are judged to have unsatisfactory performance have their Planning Delivery Grant reduced. Our Council's period for consultation, in which residents may comment on an application, is just three weeks and, very significantly, LPAs are under a statutory obligation to deliver a decision on a planning application within eight weeks of the date of validation. Failure of an LPA to meet the eight-week deadline entitles the applicant to remove their application from the jurisdiction of

the LPA and appeal directly to the Secretary of State for a decision. Thus, everyone involved in responding to an application is under tremendous pressure of time, and one result is that increasingly LPAs are requiring more and more information to be provided in the application for it to be validated. The consequential great disparity as between one LPA and another in validation standards is the reason that the DCLG has introduced a new set of proposals aimed at producing greater consistency in the validation process. These proposals are currently being consulted upon by the DCLG and the reformed requirements are scheduled to be in place as soon as April this year. Before describing the proposals and commenting on their implications, it will be helpful first to consider the practical consequences of validation standards.

Assessments of planning applications to be relevant must relate to the specific planning policies of the LPA, as set out in its Unitary Development Plan and, where necessary, they must rely on objectively established

**“Validation is the process whereby a Local Planning Authority (LPA) scrutinizes a planning application to ascertain that it contains the information the LPA requires”**

facts. These requirements apply

equally to residents as they do to LPA officers. So for developments for which matters such as access, environmental impact, traffic flow, and car parking (amongst several others) are important, unless the applicant provides independent reports with the application, issues are likely to remain unresolved and in contention right up to the point of decision. In this context, it should be remembered that the assumption is that a planning development is to be allowed unless it can be demonstrated why it should not. Residents, even if they had the resources to do so, do not have the time to gather such information, especially since the limitations of the notification procedure frequently mean that the consultation period in practice is usually nearer to two than three weeks. Even for the LPA, eight weeks is a very short time in which to obtain appropriate reliable reports, even supposing it would be willing to incur the expenditure involved. We had a vivid example of these problems in the case of Barracuda's application for a public house at what was formerly the Byrne & Son menswear shop in Formby Village. Prior to validation, Barracuda provided an independent consultant's recommendations on the sound insulation requirements to prevent noise generated within the building becoming a nuisance outside, and undertook to conform to them; that was excel-

Continued p 9.

## Planning Subgroup needs another member

*We would like to hear from any member who is interested in becoming a member of our recently formed Amenities & Planning Subgroup. The subgroup exists to further the Society's constitutional purpose "to promote high standards of planning and architecture...; to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest..."*

*The subgroup at full strength comprises a secretary and four others; at the moment, it is one short. It meets about every eight weeks to receive a report from its secretary and to consider current amenities and planning issues, so as to be in a position to advise the Society's Committee on these matters. The every day work of monitoring planning applications, and government and Council initiatives, is done by the secretary and the assistant secretary, who keep members informed. Only on an exceptionally problematic issue would the subgroup meet in a non-routine way. Access to e-mail and the World Wide Web is essential for effective operation in this field. However, no prior knowledge of planning matters is required, only a willingness to consider the various documents that are brought to the attention of subgroup members. Government planning policy is very much a live issue at the moment and it is an important part of the function of our Society to seek to influence policy making at both national and local level for the benefit of this community. We look forward to hearing from you if you think you can help*

## The Lower Alt Flood Alleviation Scheme Laura Saffery,

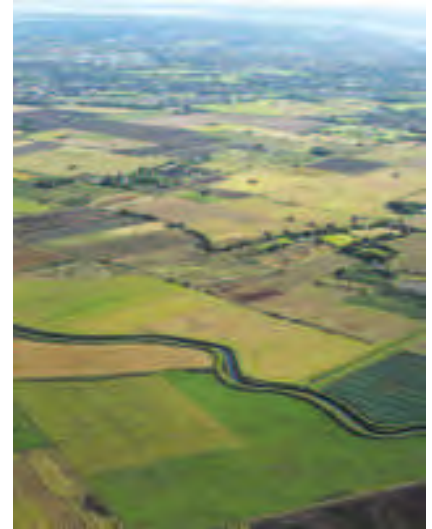
*This is an account of a presentation by Ian Rowlands of the Environment Agency given to the Society on Friday 26th January. Laura Saffery, is an E.A. External Relations Officer.*

On 26 January, Ian Rowlands, the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Manager, talked to Formby Civic Society about managing flood risk in the Lower Alt area. He explained that the Environment Agency is progressing plans to refurbish Altmouth Pumping Station and create a wetland area / flood storage area at Lunt Meadows. The overall aim of the programme is to increase the current level of flood protection to Formby and the local rural communities. Owing to the age and condition of Altmouth Pumping Station, the Environment Agency's immediate priority is to secure approval to refurbish the pumps and maintain the current level of flood protection. Subject to internal approval, new pumps are expected to be fitted in 2008 following a change from the existing diesel power supply to electric. At the presentation Celia McNally, our Project Executive, explained that "the Environment Agency's modelling work for the pumps looked at peak flows and took the effects of climate change

into account". While the upgraded pumping station will maintain the current level of flood protection, flood storage at Lunt Meadows would significantly reduce flood levels in the Alt and, to a lesser extent, in Downholland Brook. Sefton Council granted planning permission for the wetland / flood storage area in August 2006. Ian Rowlands explained that "Planning permission lasts for three years and is the first stage in securing approval for a scheme of this kind. It means that we can consider proposals for the flood storage / wetland area in more detail. Providing that the scheme is given approval, work will start on site before the planning permission expires in 2009. We will continue to work with the public and others as part of this process". One concern raised at the meeting was that mosquitoes may be attracted to the wetland area. Celia McNally explained that the presence of insects is not expected to be any different from other riverbanks in rural areas. The water in the wetland will circulate slowly, rather than being stagnant, and mosquitoes don't like moving water. On average, the storage area will only be used two or three times a year and will typi-

cally take half a day to fill and up to seven days to empty. Looking to the future, the Environment Agency will develop a management plan for the site. Celia explained that "when looking at the long term future we will need a solid partnership and an agreed management regime with whoever takes over the site". There will also be programmes for monitoring the site so that, if necessary, we can make changes to the way it is managed.

***Laura Saffery can be contacted on 01772 714110***



## Alt Flood Protection – the present position; by Desmond Brennan

In July last year, Sefton Council gave the Environment Agency (EA) planning permission to construct a flood storage area at Lunt Meadows and to carry out bank stabilisation works on Downholland Brook adjacent to the Altcar Trading Estate. These works were originally components of an integrated scheme of flood protection in the lower Alt. The third component, for which planning permission was not required, was the installation of two new large electric pumps at the Altmouth pumping station and the refurbishment of two of the large existing diesel pumps there as backup.

What was not known at the

time, and is still not generally appreciated, is that that scheme had ceased to exist even as planning permission was being sought, it having fallen not long before at a critical funding hurdle. The EA has since been working on new plans for flood protection in the area and these were the subject of a lecture given to the Society on 26th January by Ian Rowlands, NW Central Area Flood Risk Manager.

The EA's current priority is the refurbishment of the Altmouth pumping station to a standard which will provide flood protection for the lower Alt to a standard of a 1 in 100 year event, and it will do this as a

stand alone unit. This is the same standard that the existing pumping station was designed to achieve when it was commissioned in 1972; its total peak discharge capacity at that time was 84 m<sup>3</sup>/s, achieved in the main by four very large diesel pumps. Today, one of those pumps has been cannibalised to provide spares for the other three, which are now very much showing their age. They fail to start approximately 10% of the time and when a pump does not start, it can be out of order for a prolonged period of time, typically 6 - 8 weeks, which increases the risk of pumps being out of order during the wet season when regularly required. Funds for the refurb-



## Alt Flood Protection; continued

the refurbishment of the Altmouth pumping station to a standard which will provide flood protection for the lower Alt to a standard of a 1 in 100 year event, and it will do this as a stand alone unit. This is the same standard that the existing pumping station was designed to achieve when it was commissioned in 1972; its total peak discharge capacity at that time was 84 m<sup>3</sup>/s, achieved in the main by four very large diesel pumps. Today, one of those pumps has been cannibalised to provide spares for the other three, which are now very much showing their age. They fail to start approximately 10% of the time and when a pump does not start, it can be out of order for a prolonged period of time, typically 6 - 8 weeks, which increases the risk of pumps being out of order during the wet season when regularly required.

Funds for the refurbishment have been applied for and a decision on the application is expected within the next month and, in anticipation of a favourable result, design work has commenced on the refurbishment. However, despite this advanced stage of planning, it was not possible for Mr. Rowlands or his colleague, Celia McNally, who accompanied him at the lecture, to say what the pumping capacity of the refurbished station would be and how it

was to be achieved, other than that replacement electric pumps would be used. The target date for the installation of the new pumps is 2008/2009+.

The EA has a continuing interest in exploring the possibility of a flood storage area at Lunt Meadow. A flood pool there would be a much more environmentally friendly solution. Instead of the entire volume of flood water having to be pumped away in real time as it presents itself at Altmouth, the pool would store flood water so it could drain away over time at a much slower rate, usually with the assistance of some pumping. This would save fuel and would not only be cheaper to operate, but would also produce less of the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. It would also provide an enhanced habitat for wildlife and a recreational amenity for the citizens of north Merseyside.

The considerable amount of work that has already been done on such a scheme will be valuable should it be decided to take a similar scheme forward in the future. However, it is

**“there are very many questions to be asked about these vitally important matters. The EA is to consult with the community”**

worth reiterating that this much more capital-intensive scheme is for the mid to long term future, if ever. The only form of flood protection for the lower Alt which is currently subject to decision is the stand alone refurbished Altmouth pumping station..

It must be apparent from this short review that there are very many questions to be asked about these vitally important matters. The EA is to consult with the community during the period February to May this year and the intention is to publish the draft Catchment Flood Management Plan for the area in the late summer.

The EA conceded that the consultation on the earlier scheme was less than satisfactory and they promise to do better this time. In particular, they say that, in addition to a comprehensive Environmental Statement, they will also provide engineering details, including information about computer modelling of the drainage network and the climatic scenarios used to assess its capabilities.

The EA's comprehensive plans for our future flood protection will be keenly anticipated.

Desmond Brennan

## Validation; (continued from p4)

excellent. However no other independent report was included with the application. Barracuda saw no difficulty with access, waste storage and disposal, traffic flow or parking, and nor did the planning officers. When Planning Committee deferred a decision at its first consideration of the application so it could become better informed about the matter and make a site visit, it meant the eight week period was exceeded

and Barracuda were able to appeal to the Secretary of State for non-determination within the statutory time limit, which they did. At the same time as they withdrew their application, Barracuda submitted a second identical application to the Council. This meant that when Planning Committee met the second time, it was faced with the hassle and expense of proceedings before the Planning Inspectorate, or the alternative easy

path of approving the second application. This is not the occasion on which to recount the course of the Barracuda affair. Suffice it to note that it was because of the sustained opposition of community bodies that sufficient time was gained for objective evidence to be gathered to counter the unsubstantiated claims that were being made by both Barracuda and the officers, with the result that the application was eventually refused. The

## Validation; (continued from p 9)

unity of the opposition and its sustained character were exceptional and under ordinary circumstances, this harmful application would have been approved. Had Barracuda been required to produce independent assessments of the various issues attending their application as a condition of its validation, the whole process would have much more secure and efficient; it would have been possible to avoid the matter going before three meetings of Planning Committee and then the Planning Inspectorate. The larger the development, the more crucial is sound validation. This is the motivation for many more LPAs now requiring very full information prior to validation so that applications can be reliably determined within the target time.

However, it may be that some unreasonable demands are now being made by some LPAs. Certainly, the developers are complaining and they are resisting demands for the provision of more information prior to validation, but it has to be said that they are being disingenuous in arguing that the LPAs can always seek more information from them subsequent to validation. This is the context for the government's new propos-

als to reform the validation process. In order to bring about reform of the validation process, the government will have to amend the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (GDPO). The DCLG proposes two information checklists that an applicant would need to satisfy for their application to be validated. One, the *National List*, would be mandatory as determined by the DCLG, and would relate to core information as referenced in the GDPO; the other, the *Local List*, would be at the discretion of the LPA and contain additional requirements for the applicant to satisfy. The DCLG asks that each LPA should consult its community on the content of its Local List before it is adopted, but, to date, there has been no announcement from Sefton's Department of Planning and Economic Regeneration Director (PERD) concerning the arrangements for such consultation, even though time is now getting short before implementation of the new arrangement is due. Given the discretionary nature of the Local List, it is difficult to see how the government's objective of achieving greater uniformity in LPAs' requirements for validation will be achieved.

Perhaps the DCLG hopes that its model checklists, which it proposes to publish when its own consultations have been completed, will constrain LPAs in specifying their Local Lists. In the past, our Council has been one of the less demanding authorities in the information it required for validation. The PERD, in his report on the proposals to Planning Committee, while welcoming the opportunity for reform, nevertheless is concerned that the Local List will be onerous for technical and administrative staff to implement; he envisages these front-line staff ideally will be entirely responsible for validation. However, because validation is such a crucial element in the decision making process, there is a strong argument to be made that the case officer, given their knowledge of planning policy and planning law, should have an input into the validation decision. That would lay a secure foundation for the efficient and reliable subsequent determination of the application. There is undoubtedly a resource implication in sounder validation procedures, but, overall, it is very likely that costs would be no greater than at present, and very probably less. They certainly would have been in our Barracuda case!

### Formby Civic Society Annual Dinner,

Is to be held this year at Treetops Restaurant, Southport Old Road, on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> March at 6.30 for 7pm. Guests of Honour are to be Lord Fearn of Southport, Cabinet Member Sefton Council; (Leisure and Tourism) and Lady Fearn.

Tickets are £17 per person, to include a glass of wine on arrival. Dress informal. Friends of members will also be very welcome.

Please apply to Chairman before 28<sup>th</sup> February on 01704 872187

The PLAZA Community Cinema and North West Film Archive present a Special Evening of

SEFTON ON FILM on Monday 5th March 2007 at 1.30pm.

Geoff Senior the archive assistant with North West Film

Archive will give a short introduction about the programme

of special films Including:

Lumiere Brothers - Views of the city and river from 1897, Last launch of the Formby lifeboat 1916, Waterloo Cup, Crosby's Carnival of 1947, Royal Visit In 1938 ALL Tickets are £3.00 and can be obtained in advance from the PLAZA Community Cinema Box Office.

## Bequests

Members will recall from the last Newsletter that the Society was honoured to be remembered in the will of former secretary, Brenda Lindsay. The committee is keen to put the sum to best use in a manner that Brenda would have approved of. We have discussed a number of suggestions but think that members may well have some very good ideas. So, we are asking you for your views on how FCS should best use Brenda's bequest of £1500. It doesn't necessarily have to be used directly to the advantage of the Society; for example, it could benefit the Village environment. Please send any suggestions to the secretary (the E-mail address is at the back of this newsletter); we'll let you know in the next edition what the response was and what we decided to do.

We'd encourage all members to consider leaving an article or sum of money to Formby Civic Society in

their will. We are entirely self-supporting, relying on subscriptions and donations to carry out our functions of protecting Formby's heritage. An existing will can be changed at any time by adding a codicil. Your solicitor should check the final wording but the Secretary can provide some example wordings. Articles, such as photographs and other memorabilia, may be particularly appropriate to add to the Society's collection and for display to the next generation of 'Formbyites'. And, of course, such a gift whilst you're still alive to see its use by the Society would be even better!

here are several ways you can leave a gift to the Formby Civic Society, among them:

Pecuniary Gift ~ when you leave a specific sum or a percentage of your estate, for example, specifying a gift of 5% of the value of your estate.

Residual Gift ~ when you bequeath

the residue from your estate after all other bequests, costs, etc, have been deducted.

Specific Legacy ~ your Formby photograph collection, for example.

A form of words that could be used for a bequest would be:

***"I give the sum of {amount in words and figures} to the Formby Civic Society, OR I give All, or a Share (eg 5%) of my estate {write whatever you want to give} to the Formby Civic Society, registered charity no. 516789, whose Secretary currently resides at 5 Phillips Close, Formby, L37 4BD, to be applied by the Society for its charitable purposes, and I further direct that the receipt of the Honorary Treasurer or other authorised officer shall be sufficient discharge to my Executors."***

## Art Group Report by Barbara Mossop

*Members of the Art Group visited Exhibitions at CHET, Little Crosby; The AFA, Formby and also the Atkinson Library, Southport, as listed in the last Newsletter.*

*Recently we held a very successful 'get-together', this time at the Grapes, Freshfield, when we discussed the 2007 Exhibition and also our future programme. As we will be guests at the Liver Sketching Club Life-class, it was decided that we would go in two small groups. The first visit is to take place this Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January and a further one will take place either at the end of February or beginning of March. We also decided to visit the Magpie Gallery in Little Crosby, run by a local Artist, as featured in the Formby times recently. A suggestion was put forward that we should also see if the young owner of the Mill Gallery, Parbold, would give us a demonstration. He is very talented.*

*The future of the Open Air Exhibition was fully discussed, further to my telephone conversation with Dr. Brennan and recent articles in the Formby Times. It would not be possible for the artists to donate the full value of their paintings to the Society. At present they give 10% plus hanging fee. If they could not continue as at present, then they would presumably just have to take details of interested purchasers and follow up sales after the exhibition but I cannot see this working!*

*All the members want to continue holding the Exhibition and are willing to help on the day. We hope the above matter can be clarified, so that arrangements can be made for this year's Exhibition, due to take place on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007. At present, whilst only the hanging fees and 10% of sales come to the Society, the purchasers do make cheques payable in full to the Society and artists are reimbursed, less our commission. I don't know if this is a way around the situation?*

# History Group Report

**Our current archive conservation needs have now been established with the help of Nickie Lewis from Liverpool (now National) Conservation Centre who spent a day looking at our archives and has prepared a report for our guidance. The National Conservation Centre is also able and willing to supply materials needed at lower cost than normal suppliers. First orders have been received.. Our volunteers will now be contacted for an initial meeting and a work programme started. This is not going to be a quick exercise. It will take much time and effort and we are very grateful for the financial support Formby Parish Council have provided to make a start**

In the meantime new member Tony Bonney has made an encouraging start on an ambitious programme of scanning and digitising the Society's photo-archive, including the Sibley Transparency Collection; nearly 2000 high quality 35 mm slides of local houses, cottages, street scenes and landscapes photographed between 1950 – 1980. He has also scanned about 270 mounted black and white prints. High resolution images are being stored on a special (flexible) data base, which also allows the inclusion of notes, etc. The technical requirements of this programme are to be reviewed by a small subcommittee including John Turner, Desmond Brennan, the Chairman and myself.

This and other work for the Society will be considerably assisted by our successful application for a free Computer package from BT. This is expected to arrive in the next few weeks and will have a BT broadband connection.

The Meetings programme is underway. A particularly well attended meeting was devoted to a presentation and display of half of our ceramic cottage collection. This was the first time such a large number had

been on view at the same time with opportunity to compare them with the appropriate Sibley drawing and a recent photograph. The publicity for the meeting happily resulted in the generous gift of a further six similar high quality Formby cottage models by the same maker, by a local resident who had inherited them from his father

The last meeting was a talk on the making of a DVD, 'Portrait of a Community' by the Alec Watson and Tony Thompson of the Formby Photographic Group and based on a selection of still photographs and Video made in the 1980s. Perhaps we should be thinking of using our archive for a similar venture?

The Society has been approached by Formby Parish Council for our views on 'Village Heritage', (please see questionnaire). We have also been invited to again join in National Archaeology Week, in July. This year we propose focussing on the two old Tide Poles at Formby Point, originally read by the Formby Lifeboat Keeper. Long after the boat had been decommissioned the readings

**"A particularly well attended meeting was devoted to a presentation and display of half of our ceramic cottage collection"**

continued until the 1970's and the actual records still exist. This would be an opportunity to look at the history of these poles, unique in the Mersey. With the assistance of Sefton Council and Sefton Coast Partnership we may even be able to arrange to re-fix a replica scale to one of the poles!

The Society has been invited by the Lancashire Federation of Family History Societies to 'host' the Federation's annual autumn meeting. This will be held at the Formby Hall Golf Club on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October. More details to follow.

**Barbara Yorke**

# WALK FORMBY

In the 1990s Dave Addison produced a book of seven walks around Formby. We are very grateful to him for giving us permission to reprint the booklet, which we hope to do later this year. However, it will need a fair bit of work to bring it up to date – there have been many changes in geography and a few in our historical knowledge during the past decade.

Are there any members who would fancy a good, healthy walk over these routes to check them out for us? The 7 walks are all circular, of varying length and starting from either Freshfield or Formby Stations. If you care to have a go, choose the one you fancy and we'll let you have a detailed route description together with some background notes about certain spots around the route, explaining their history, natural features etc. The sheets have space for you to add any comments or corrections – and that's the key thing, to ensure that when we eventually print the booklet it's bang up-to-date and accurate. The seven walks are

1. Freshfield – red squirrel reserve. 5½ miles,
2. Freshfield – Woodvale. 6 miles,
3. Woodvale – Cheshire Lines. 8 miles,
4. Formby – Town Trail. A choice here of
  - A) short route. 3 miles,
  - B) medium route. 5¾ miles,
  - C) long route. 7 miles,
5. Formby – Cabin Hill. 4½ miles,
6. Freshfield – Broad Lane. 7 miles,
7. Formby – shore. 6 miles

If you are interested in taking part please drop a note to the secretary (or E-mail [secretary@formbycivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@formbycivicsociety.org.uk))

# Website Improvements

Have you looked at our website recently? Since it was launched three years ago there have been lots of improvements and a great deal of interesting and factual material about Formby and the Society has been added. Yet more improvements are planned by 'Web-master' Sam Gerrard and the Committee's small Communication Group

A new system to be launched soon will allow us to update the website in a more flexible manner than previously. We will then be able to create an infinite number of pages and sections. We will also be able to upload multiple photographs for each article. And as a complete bonus the system will feature a new interactive map! This is being developed in conjunction with

Countryside, a multi-disciplinary company, combining expertise in design and communication, mapping/GIS and landscape consultancy. They operate primarily within the environmental sector, working with clients including government agencies, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, charities and private businesses. We are fortunate to have been selected to help develop a prototype map based on Formby Point

Using the mapviewer, website visitors can build a detailed visual impression of an area, find out route information in preparation for a visit and learn about features of interest. The viewer's

functions are divided between three linked panels: an interactive map, a 360 degree panorama and the info panel. By clicking on a numbered route viewpoint in the map panel, a scrollable 360 degree view from that location will appear in the panorama panel above. A sightline vector arrow will appear on the map, and the route to the next viewpoint is displayed in the info panel to the right. Objects of interest are highlighted on both the panorama and the map; clicking on displays relevant text and images in the info panel, which can be toggled back to show route information.

**"visitors can build a detailed visual impression of an area, find out route information in preparation for a visit and learn about features of interest".**

Other features include an O.S. grid reference display, compass bearings, a scale bar that can be dragged and stretched between any two points on the map to show distances, and the option to toggle between a map view and an aerial photograph. The map panel features zoom and pan functions, included a 'click-and-drag' pan. There is also a self-contained help file explaining all of the map-viewer's functions.

Anyone at all interested in local heri-

tage is interested in maps and can spend hours over them. Conventional maps however do not usually enter into an interactive dialogue with the user. This is exactly what happens using Countryside. Not only does it provide what at first looks like a conventional map, for instance, of a route round a historic landscape with textual description but this changes at the 'click of the mouse' to an aerial photograph with zoom facility. Clearly marked 'stopping points' on a suggested route then allow the user in either map or aerial photograph mode to bring up not only a virtual 360 degree panorama around *each* point, complete with sightline vector arrow and superimposed compass bearing but also a panel of text explaining the significance of the landscape seen. This makes it easy to highlight the significance of details of that particular landscape in a way that a conventional map could not do.

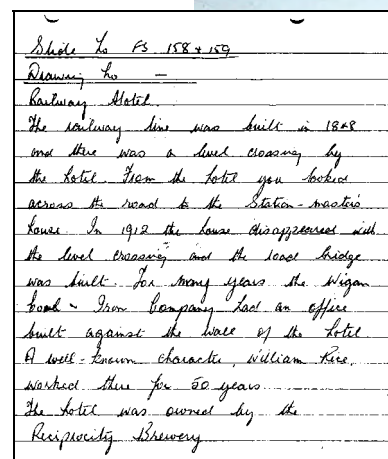
This is an unique development surpassing conventional websites and booklets. The design of the programme enables even an inexperienced user to grasp its full potential very quickly. Digital projection onto a screen would facilitate very easy interactive use by a group. The smooth functionality of this software is both engaging and stimulating,

R.A. Yorke

## Miss Peel and her notes

It is sad to record the death of Miss Peel who was Chairman of the Society 1979 -1980. Prior to that, Miss Peel, who lived alone, had been in the Civil Service for many years. Her greatest service to the Society was her transcription of the various often disorderly notes made by Muriel Sibley on her drawings and photographs.

Miss Peel collated all these in what are now known as 'Miss Peel's Notes' now a very useful part of our archive.



Sketch to Ps 158 & 159  
Railway Hotel  
The railway line was built in 1868  
and there was a level crossing by  
the hotel. From the hotel you looked  
across the road to the Station-master's  
house. In 1912 the house disappeared with  
the level crossing and the level bridge  
was built. For many years the Nigan  
Food & Iron Company had an office  
built against the wall of the hotel.  
A well-known character, William King,  
worked there for 50 years.  
The hotel was owned by the  
Respectability Brewery.



(Left) A random example of one of her many notes; here on the Railway Hotel.

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**Registered Charity No  
516789**

Four of the Reeves Formby Ceramic Cottage Collection.



Some of the 39 beautiful ceramic models of Formby Cottages,  
(see History Group report, 12).

A, 61-63 Ravenmeols Lane; B, Ravenmeols Farm; C, Old School  
House; D, Formby Hall Dovecote.

## Future Programme

23/02/2007 - GENERAL MEETING

"Liverpool's 800th Anniversary Celebrations" Adrian Pearce

08/03/2007 - HISTORY GROUP

"The Cunard Line" Kevin Bargaen,

16/03/07 – NATIONAL SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING WEEK, (SPECIAL MEETING),

"The Search for Absolute Zero" at Formby High School Sixth Form College, Freshfield Road, Formby.

23/03/2007 - GENERAL MEETING

"Conservation of the Built Environment in Sefton" Ceri Jones

12/04/2007 - HISTORY GROUP

Members' Evening

27/04/2007 - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

AGM, followed by talk on "Formby Beach as Part of the Ribble Estuary" by Leslie Cryer

### ART GROUP PROGRAMME

February (End), Visit to Liver Sketching Club.

March; Visit to Magpie Gallery, Little Crosby.

April; Visit to Botanic Gardens, and Museum, followed by visit to the Victorian School-house. Members interested in any of the above should contact the Art Group Representative (Tel 01704 873920).for further details and dates.